WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY - Founded December 17, 1857

OCTOBER 1980

WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

TOUR BACKSTAGE AT MICHIGAN THEATRE, HEAR ORGAN FRIDAY, OCTOBER 24; JAZZ PROGRAM NOVEMBER 20

Instead of jazz, the October WCHS meeting will feature a behind-the-scenes tour of Ann Arbor's Michigan Theater at **6:30 p.m. Friday**, October 24. The former movie palace is now run by the Michigan Community Theater Foundation.

Because Hazen Schumacher had a conflicting commitment in October, his program on "Jazz in Michigan" has been postponed to November 20. (The regular date falls on Thanksgiving Day.)

The guided tour will include backstage and projection room as well as theater proper, balcony and marquee and a demonstration of the Barton theater organ.

The tour is free. However, tourgoers are invited to the 8 p.m. showing of "The Phantom of the Opera" with tickets at $4, $5 or $6 available at the door. Parking is available in the Great Lakes Federal lot.

ANN ARBOR HISTORIC HOMES TOUR SUNDAY OCTOBER 26 FEATURES SEVERAL BUILDINGS IN OLD FOURTH WARD

The second annual Ann Arbor Historic Homes tour sponsored by the Greenhills School Auxiliary to benefit their scholarship fund will be held noon to 5 p.m. Sunday, October 26, featuring several buildings in the proposed Old Fourth Ward Historic District.

The tour buildings, including examples of restorations, renovations and adaptive reuse, are:

617 East Huron, Harris Hall, 1866-67—restored and converted to business use.

712 East Ann, 1856 Greek Revival home of Mrs. David James.

311 East Ann, 1866 Italianate home of Susan Wineberg.

220 North Fifth Avenue, 1845 Classical Revival house—Margo Mac Innes apartment and publications agency.

303 North Division, 1837 Greek Revival remodeled in 1866 to Italianate—restored by owners Hilbert/Wineman Enterprises.

North Fifth Avenue and Summit, Central Brewery, 1860's—adapted to apartments by John Hollowell and Bob and Nancy Harrington.

1327 Jones Drive, Northern Brewery, 1886, later Ann Arbor Foundry—renovated 1977 by Fry/Peters architects.

Tourgoers may also visit Greenhills School, 850 Greenhills Drive off Earhart Road. Tickets at $5 available on the tour and at several businesses.

COOKBOOKS, 'WIZARD', ANTIQUES ON AGENDA

Mary Blaske, WCHS vice-president and program chairman, is lining up a varied series of programs for 1980-81.

Besides those already announced she plans a December Christmas party at Clement's Library and a talk by Jan Longone, perhaps Ann Arbor's foremost food and wine expert, on "Michigan Cookbooks" in January.

In February, Gerald Linderman, U-M professor of history, will discuss "The Lure of the Wizard of Oz and How It Fits In With America's History".

In May, members will be invited to bring a favorite antique object—furniture, glass, book or what have you—and a group of professional antique dealers will be on hand to tell them about it and appraise it.

We hope all of you can come.

SALINE NAMES MRS. BYRNE

Alice Byrne is president of Saline Historical Society, succeeding Paul Meyer who is now secretary. Wendy Blackie is vice-president and Douglas and Penny Jones share treasurer's duties.

IMPORTANT: 'IMPRESSIONS' WILL NOT BE SENT AFTER NOVEMBER IF DUES UNPAID

WCHS wants to keep you on its mailing list after November but will not be able to continue sending *The Impressions* or meeting notices to persons who have not paid their dues after that.

Costs of publishing and mailing the newsletter have increased. President Dann has asked the membership committee to launch a membership drive soon and consider raising dues.

To insure getting *The Impressions* and support WCHS's efforts to preserve the county's heritage please send your dues to Mary Blaske, Membership Chairman, 820 Third Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48103.

Presently annual dues are $5 for an individual, $9 for a couple. Senior citizens are $4 and $7 respectively. If already a member of another local historical society in the county, $1 may be deducted from any of the above. Life memberships are $100 individual or $150 for a couple.

Commercial memberships are Patron, $100; Sponsor, $75; Donor, $50; and Friend, $25. Please send your dues today.

MRS. KOCH DONATES BOOKS

Edna Nowland Koch has given WCHS several old atlases, books and magazines including an 1874 Washtenaw County Atlas. Other items include three Harper's Magazines of 1850-52, an 1896 child's story book, a picture portfolio, scrapbook with clippings, recipe book and atlases of 1903, 1934 (Century of Progress world's fair edition) and 1951 and a 1952 Saturday Evening Post.

She also donated an unusual item for next spring's auction—a turn-of-the-century "hibachi".

FROM VOYAGEURS TO HENRY FORD:

Fiddling All Around Michigan

Michiganians don't have to go to the hills of Tennessee to hear real live "foot-stomping" fiddling according to Robert M. Fleck, folk arts coordinator for the Michigan Council for the Arts, who spoke at the September WCHS meeting.

Michigan has its own fiddlers—500 of them, he estimates. Fleck, former head of the Michigan Fiddlers Association, says there are 1,000 fiddlers—as opposed to violinists—in the Great Lakes area.

For the past two years he has been documenting the characteristic musics and dancing of Michigan and is just finishing a two-part movie entitled, "Save The Last Dance".

He showed the first part which traces the history of folk music in Michigan from the arrival of Europeans in the Great Lakes area in the 1600's to Henry Ford's revival of old-time music in the 1920's and 30's. The second film, which was still in the cutting room, deals with more recent and current music and dancing around the state in the folk tradition.

"A folk art is one you learn from somebody telling you how to do it—you don't read it in a book or listen to a record or learn it in school. That's my one-sentence definition of folk arts."

The sound, color film uses outdoor scenes, rare photographs, drawings and paintings and a narrator against a background of traditional fiddle and dulcimer tunes to tell its story.

"Only the hardiest of trappers will venture across the vast trackless snows of the Great Lakes forests," the narrator begins. "They crossed thousands of miles of water and forest in search of rich furs. On the fringes of these lands were frontier settlements.

"For these hardy pioneers, life was harsh and often bleak. The voyageurs, trappers, soldiers and settlers would gladly seize a chance to brighten their rugged lives of endless chores with a spirited dance.

"In Detroit, the French city of the straits, there was a fiddle in almost every household. They had arrived with the settlers from their homes in faraway places. They came by boat, then with the voyageurs canoeing down the winding rivers of French-held Canada, safely north of the British-controlled Atlantic coast colonies.

"With these colonists came a tradition of music and dance almost as ancient as civilization in Europe, where around the year 1200 there appeared the ancestor of the piano-a hollow box over the top of which were stretched strings that players could beat with little sticks or pluck with their fingers.

"The instrument that became the dulcimer produced a regular and melodious beat. These people also played an ancestor of the violin which was held upright, later horizontal. It too became popular for its melodies and simple harmonies. Singly or together fiddle and dulcimer made music and people joined together in time to this music to dance.

"At first only nobility could afford these early instruments, but all levels of society enjoyed and played them by the time the French settled North America." The instruments were thus included with other items necessary for life at early eighteenth century outposts like Detroit and Michillimackinac.

"After decades of bitter warfare, in 1761 France ceded the Great Lakes region to Great Britain. Soldiers' coats changed from blue to red.

"In the summer of 1778, Scottish Michillimackinac fur trader John Askins wrote to a friend in Montreal urging that two fiddles be sent to provide music at social occasions. Two fiddles appear in Askins' yearly inventory. Early Detroit journals describe dances lasting until dawn, at times with music only by fiddlers.

"As early as 1668, the famous British journalist, Samuel Pepys, reported fiddle and dulcimer being played together at a London puppet show. After the Scots unsuccessful fight for independence, the English banned Scottish bagpipes, causing much traditional Scottish-type music to be played on the fiddle.

"Again the flags over Detroit changed after the Revolution, this time to stars and bars. Many of George Washington's soldiers took payment for service in the form of rocky New England and New York hillsides only to discover that labor yielded rocks more often than crops. Many turned westward to seek the fabled rich oak openings of the old northwest.

"Soon log cabins were erected on the frontier. They served both as home and ballroom floor. A century earlier dulcimers were reported in New England.

"The fiddle and dulcimer were likely among the settlers precious few belongings brought to the northwest. A dulcimer player or fiddler was all the orchestra needed to set a lively set of reels or a square dance in motion. Settlers traveled long distances to such dances.

"The immigrants rode the Erie Canal across New York and then transferred to steamboat for the trip across Lake Erie to Detroit. Later travelers rode steam trains. The territory grew rapidly.

The territory's public halls and inns, in stately Greek revival style, reflected rapid growth. These inns between the early turnpike towns housed many a dance where weary travelers might forget a tortuous day's progress over muddy trails.

In prospering towns, manufacturers produced instruments and sold them to musicians. New tunes followed itinerant players like this banjo player photographed in early Kalamazoo. Perhaps he was on his way up from the south where the banjo's ancestors were used by

African slaves.

Meanwhile famine in Ireland caused waves of immigration to the United States and the westward movement brought many Irish to Michigan. Here established Protestant Yankees saw the Catholic Irish unfavorably. Both enjoyed the violin for dance music and very gradually the Irish jig joined the French quadrille, Scottish foursome reel and Yankee contra dance.

The growing tension between north and south at last erupted into a terrible civil war. The conflict took the lives of many a Michigan man who served in the union army—Frenchmen, Scots, Yankees, Irish and Germans alike.

Michigan's fiddlers who did return brought back new melodies learned in the stag dances of the union camp. Even prior to the Civil War, Germans, fleeing political unrest in Europe, immigrated to Michigan. They added the waltz and schottische and brought a new type of dulcimer.

People worked hard to reap a bountiful harvest on Michigan's rich farmland. To shield the hard won fruits of their labors from the harsh Michigan winters, they built barns. Michigan's pioneer "cathedrals" shook not only to the beat of the threshing floor but also to the tread of the rye waltz. The people worked hard to help each other survive and shared in home-made entertainment almost as vigorous as their work.

Since before the Civil War Michigan's forests were cut by French Canadian men of the woods and Yankee sawmill operators. First the farmer-logger worked in the woods, living in primitive camps all winter, then in spring driving the logs downriver to mill. New tunes were learned in the camps and taken back to the farm by fiddlers like this one playing for a logger's stag dance on the ice. Narrow gauge railroads arrived in the woods so each tree could be brought to mill despite the distance from a big river.

The age of the lumberjack arrived. In their camps, the dulcimer earned the name of lumberjack piano because of its piano-like tone and portability.

In residences in cities like Grand Rapids, Detroit and Kalamazoo, ballrooms echoed the sound of violins, basses, dulcimers and pianos playing the music of composers like "Cub" Berdan of Adrian who wrote the "Pacific Quadrille."

A genteel Saginaw lady of the 1870's displayed a fashionable new Spanish guitar, an instrument which rapidly became popular with respectable young people. The Johnson girls formed the Michigamme band in the western Upper Peninsula.

The clear, cold shores of Lake Superior beckoned to Finns, Swedes, Norwegians and Germans who in their turn brought a long history of violin and accordion music. Their accordions originated in Austria in the 1820's and quickly spread throughout Europe.

Marquette began as a mining outpost in the 1850's. After the Civil War the outpost rose to prominence as iron poured forth from underground and moved by sail down the lakes through the newly opened Soo Locks.

Miners from Italy found work in the constantly expanding Upper Peninsula copper and iron mines and introduced their own tradition of violin, accordion and mandolin music to places with names like Vulcan and Redjacket.

"Near the end of the 1800's, Michigan boasted a wide diversity of peoples." The shaded Michigan maps indicated areas most heavily settled in 1880 by people from New York state, Ohio, Canada and Germany. By 1900 Poles had settled in the north and south, Germans had spread widely throughout the state, Italians lived in the mining regions of the northwestern Upper Peninulsa. Close by lived Finns. The Swedes were more widespread.

Because these ethnic groups lived near to one another and had to supply their own dance music, German waltzes mixed with Scottish reels and French quadrilles joined with Finnish ratika and Irish jigs. This was Michigan music.

As the century drew to a close more instruments were produced for growing numbers of Michigan musicians like this fine dulcimer made by Mortimer Delano. Players like the Kelly family performed old favorite fiddle and dulcimer tunes such as "Money Musk".

In the bustling cities, pianos were the rage. So was ragtime. Beginning in the cities, telephones, electricity and then automobiles brought rapid change. Distances that had taken days to travel were spanned in hours and the house party started to yield to the movies.

Tensions in Europe led to World War I and again thousands of Michigan men and women answered the call. Some returned to the small towns of the lower and upper peninsula and farms with logged out sandy soil. Radio soon came onto the scene.

In 1923, Henry Ford with friends Thomas Edison and Harvey Firestone met Jeb Bisbee, an old-time fiddler whose tunes reminded him of the music of his youth. He started a revival of old time music and square dancing. At one time he even had the music played in Ford dealerships.

Fleck said that collecting photographs from all over the state took the longest time. Only about 40 percent of all he found made it into the final film. He would eventually like to publish a book from his collection after he finishes the movies.

Fleck started playing classical music and noted that probably every violin player calls his instrument his fiddle. He played "Turkey in the Straw", "Irish Washerwoman" and Miss McLeod's Reel.

David Park Williams, director of the Cobblestone Farm Country Dancers and Marie Waxman of the dancers who happened to be in the audience, were persuaded to give an impromptu demonstration of the schottische and polka.

HISTORIC DISTRICT FOR PARKER MILL, SCHOOL?

Washtenaw County Historic District Commission recently elected new members and is moving to have the Parker mill and house and Popkins School designated an historic district. A public hearing was held September 11.

New members, all attorneys, are Leonard Kitchen of Chelsea, Diana Pratt and Francis O'Brien, both of Ann Arbor. They replace Lydia Muncy, David Pollock and Carol Lyons.

ANDERSON HEADS GSWC

Leigh Anderson is president of the Genealogy Society of Washtenaw County; Alvin Joslyn of Ypsilanti, vice-president; Sherry Rathburn, secretary; and Flora Burt of Chelsea, treasurer. Directors are Harold Jones of Chelsea, Lydia Muncy, Judy Punnett of Ypsilanti and Nancy Warner of Dearborn.

F.X. BLOUIN TO SPEAK ON ETHNIC ANCESTORS

Francis X. Blouin, Jr., associate archivist at Bentley Library, will speak on "Surveying Your Ethnic Ancestors" at the Genealogy Society of Washtenaw County meeting at 2:30 p.m. Sunday, October 26, at Washtenaw Community College. Class period starts at 1 p.m.

1980–81 COMMITTEES NAMED BY PRESIDENT

President John Dann has appointed the following committees for the coming year:

Art Fair and plant sale: Rosalie Collie, chairman, Ellen St. Amour, Herb Pfabe, Wilma Steketee and Angela Welch.

Auction: Hazel Proctor, chairman, Frances Couch, Ethelyn Morton, Dave Pollock and Wilma Steketee.

Collection: Pat Austin, chairman, John Dann and Alice Ziegler.

Membership: Mary Blaske, chairman, Mrs. St. Amour, Mrs. Couch, Harold Jones, Mrs. Welch and consulting members, John Dann and Brad Taylor, treasurer.

Other assignments include Dr. Dann, curator; Mary Blaske, program chairman; Donna Miller, refreshments; and Alice Ziegler, editor of *The Impressions*.

The plant sale was inadvertently overlooked this fall until too late.

U–M COSTUME SPECIALIST TO SURVEY COLLECTION

Professor Zelma H. Weisfeld who is in charge of costumes in the University of Michigan theatre department has kindly volunteered to survey the entire WCHS clothing collection. The Collection Committee will be delighted to have her help.

Washtenaw County Historical Society
President: Dr. John C. Dann,
Vice-president: Mary Steffek Blaske
Recording Secretary: Alice Ziegler
Corresponding Secretary: Ethelyn Morton
Treasurer: Brad Taylor

HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

Chelsea Historical Society—7:30 p.m. second Monday at McKune Memorial Library, 221 South Main Street. November program: member spotlight. Members asked to bring things and reminisce about Chelsea history. Vice-president Sally Rendell says they hope to write down and collect the information elicited.

Dexter Historical Society—Special display of political and election memorabilia at museum, 3443 Inverness, October-December. Museum open 1-3 p.m. Tuesdays and second and fourth Saturdays.

Manchester Historical Society—8 p.m. Monday, October 27, at Emanuel Church.

Milan Historical Society—7:30 p.m. third Wednesday of month at Hack House, 775 County Street.

Saline Historical Society—2 p.m. Sunday, October 19, at high school library. Bob Lyons of Ypsilanti will speak on antique toys.

Ypsilanti Historical Society—Third annual fall dinner meeting, 5 p.m. Sunday, October 26, at Masonic Temple, 76 North Huron, prepared by Eastern Star, Tom Jones, executive secretary of Historical Society of Michigan, will speak. Tickets limited to 200, none at door, may be ordered from museum, at $5 each, $2.50 for children.

Museum, 220 North Huron, open 2-4 p.m. Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. Special exhibit of old bells.

Editor: Alice Ziegler, 663-8826
Keylining: Anna Thorsch

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING

6:30 p.m. FRIDAY OCTOBER 24, 1980

MICHIGAN THEATRE

**603 E. Liberty
Ann Arbor, Michigan**

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